

Larry Kubert, clothes by Jason's

Bold stripes for the bold man.

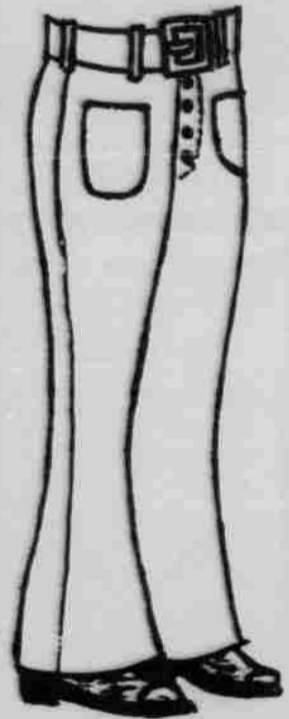
FASHION COUNTRY

Tweeds and textures. . . for the rough and ready look.

Beth Malashock, Clothes by Wooden Nickel



BELL and FLARE JEANS



\$6.95

Blue Denim
Solid Colors
And Stripes

LINCOLN
ARMY
& WESTERN
STORE
11th & N

SPECIAL
HARNESS BOOTS

\$19.95

Denims offer fashion leeway

They treat races and sexes equally. They are found in homes of the rich and the poor, in the city and the country. You can see them shinnying up trees and shining up rocking chair seats. They unite the Old West with the New Left.

Denims are America's common denominator.

They are to the pants industry what Volkswagen is to Detroit. They have remained essentially unchanged since 1850, when Levi Strauss went west to California and turned canvas into gold. Even today's bell-bottomed jeans are copies of a functional style of the '90s, designed to pass easily over long-toed boots.

STRAUSS HAD never dreamed of Original Riveted Trousers when he came to San Francisco. He thought the canvas he had imported from Nimes, France, would be great for tents. Some say the material came to be called "serge de Nimes," then "de Nimes," and eventually "denim." Anyway, Strauss soon discovered the material was unfit for tents.

But people of Strauss's ilk are the bricks in the foundation of American capitalism. Strauss would have been the first to say that serendipity is no accident. When a miner came to call one day, and Strauss decided the man would be the first in camp to have canvas pants.

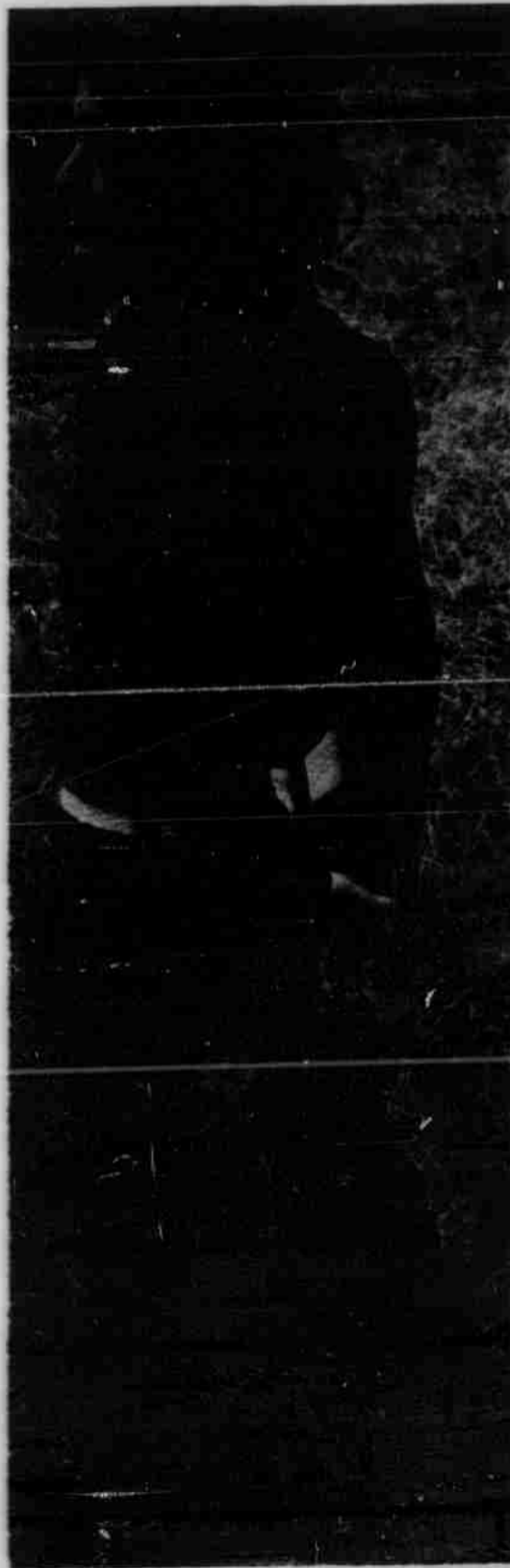
Later Alkali Ike, the prospector's Ralph Nader, gets credit for prodding Strauss's company into adding the famous rivets. Ike liked to carry rocks around in his pockets, and he knew that in the shoot-first, ask-questions-later Old West, a guarantee was a guarantee. Finally his Virginia City tailor riveted the pockets down for him, and soon after all Levi's had their trademark.

THESE TROUSERS with rivets were such a good thing that no one thought to conceal them until the late 1920s when H.D. Lee's innovation saved future generations millions of dollars in scratched saddles and furniture.

Early Levi's were loose-fitting and canvas-colored. Legend has it that cowboys were responsible for the snug, low-slung, fit of today's jeans—because of the need for comfort in the saddle and protection from snags on cactus and sagebrush.

Denims today are mass produced, but the process is usually craftsmanlike: Levi's, for example, go through 26 operations and 17 kinds of thread. What goes on in the heads of world fashion exploiters, however, means little to denim wearers. They may come tie-dyed, bleached or frayed, but these are better seen as a reaction to fashion, or a parody of fashion.

The obvious point is this: if you don't cotton to the latest Paris fashion tantrum, denims give you some leeway.



Beth Malashock